DEPARTMENT ON CHURCH AND SOCIETY
DIVISION OF STUDIES - WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

project papers

On the Common Christian Responsibility Toward Areas of Rapid Social Change

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ARCHIVES

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RAPID SOCIAL CHANGE IN ARGENTINA, CHILE AND URUGUAY

Report and findings of a study conference sponsored by the Confederation of Protestant Churches of the River Plate with the cooperation of the Department of Church and Society of the World Council of Churches. This conference was held in Montevideo, Uruguay May 31 to June 3, 1957.

(Translated from the Spanish edition)

oject papers are intended primarily for the use of consultants and study groups working on these topics. ey are issued for information and as a basis of discussion. Comments and additional material on the subject atter of these papers are solicited.

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Christian Responsibility

in Areas of Rapid Social Change:

ARGENTINA, CHILE, URUGUAY

Report of a conference sponsored by the Confederation of Protestant Churches of the River Plate with the cooperation of the Department of Church and Society of the World Council of Churches.

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MONTEVIDEO, URUGUAY
May 31 to June 3, 1957

SUMMARY OF THE CONFERENCE

An interesting period of study and consultation was held in Montevideo from May 31 to June 3, 1957. Its subject was changing social conditions in Argentina, Uruguay and Chile and the opportunities and responsibilitees they present to us as Christians.

Twenty-five representatives from the churches of the three countries took part, representing six denominations and seven nationalities. The meetings were held in Crandon Institute and the Central Methodist Church. The Rev. Rudolf Obermuller, president of the ecumenical committee, presided at the opening session and the chairman of the Uruguay Federation, Pastor Abel Jourdan, gave an address of welcome.

In a talk that set the keynote for later studies, the Rev. Paul Abrecht, Executive Secretary of the Department of Church and Society of the World Council of Churches, spoke on the topic: "Situations of Rapid Social Change in Asia and Africa, and How the Churches Are Meeting Them."

Pastor Daniel P. Monti of Argentina and Pastor Emilio Castro of Uruguay presented detailed analyses of the present social situation in their respective countries. In the absence of Pastor Pedro Zóttele of Chile, who sent in his report later, a seminary student, Mr. Jose Pulgar, gave his views on the situation in Chile. Developing the theme of Christian responsibility, Miss Jorgelina Lozada presented a paper on "The Biblical Bases of Christian Social Responsibility".

Although they do not appear in this report, several other interesting papers were presented. Dr. Fernandez Arlt spoke on "Catholicixm as Expressed in Its Political Paries"; Mr. Ehrique Regueira on "Communism" and Pastor Julio R. Sabanes on "Neo-socialism". Each paper was followed by a discussion period during which additional information was offered and ideas exchanged. Careful study was given to the reports of the Committees on Responsible Citizenship, Large City Problems and the Rural Situation.

The general feeling of the participants was that the four days were most profitable and indicated new tasks for the Federations and their churches. The hope was also expressed that new and broader studies on social matters

would be undertaken, in order to meet the demands of the day and to give greater and more effective witness to the transforming power of the Gospel.

In conclusion, an expression of gratitude to those who organized the conference is in order, particularly to Mr. L. Odell and the Uruguay brethren; and an assurance that their work was not in vain. On the contrary, it may be regarded as the beginning of a broader interest in the study of the development of human relations in the spirit of Christ.

A HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE ARGENTINE SITUATION

by Daniel P. Monti

Since the so-called Liberating Revolution of September, 1956, we in Argentina have been openly engaged in a struggle to 1) recover fully our liberal and republican democratic heritage and 2) to actualize its basic principles, reinterpreting and applying them to present-day social, economic and political realities.

To understand fully this statement, one must remember that there are two well-defined and sharply opposed currents of thought running through the history of Argentina. Since colonial times these have fought for power and they have alternately dominated the political scene.

One is in the old tradition of colonialism: a strongly conservative and clerical cast of thought that has never ceased its efforts to gain control and hold the nation in the iron grip of the past, politically, religiously and ideologically. The other is a current of liberalism, very progressive and constructive, often called the "May Tradition".

The two first came into conflict in the River Plate region with the advent of Governor Francisco de Paula Bucarelli y Ursua (1766-1770). He was the very incarnation of 18th century Spanish liberalism, a liberalism modeled on the ideas of the French Encyclopedists and fostered in Spain and its colonies by Charles III (1759-1788).

The so-called "colonial spirit" was a product of medieval scholasticism, a philosophy which continued to hold sway in Spain long after the rest of Europe had abandoned it. It was autocratic and clerical, absolutist and aristocratic. Exported to Argentina, it tried to impose here as in Spain an arbitrary spiritual unity based on uniformity of thought in politics, religion and philosophy. The church and the state acted together in propagating it. "The absolutism of the crown allied itself with intransigent orthodoxy". Thus graduates of the universities were made "to profess the Catholic faith, swear obedience and loyalty to the governing authority, and to believe and to teach the immaculate conception of the Virgin".

Another writer confirms this, saying that the higher education so imparted in Buenos Aires "did not

have the liberty and liberal ideas that some suppose, due to the fear of contradicting principles of religious dogma and, no less, the fear of propagating ideas contrary to royal authority".

However, in spite of the official fear of antagonizing the church or the state, "the instinctive rebellion of the 'porteno' (Buenos Aires youth) and their lack of respect for accepted formulae not in harmony with their particular temper" made itself apparent. This explains why, toward the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century, there was a general readiness for innovation, a repudiation of Aristotle and of scholasticism, in centers of learning in the colony like Buenos Aires. A priest, Professor Chorroarín, for example, had stated that "he who is really proud to be a philosopher does not marry the authority nor the doctrine of anyone".

It was clear that America was not willing to receive Europe's castoff scholosticism and that the colonies were ready for a change of ideological climate.

The two currents of thought we have referred to were already well-defined when Governor Bucarelli reached Buenos Aires on November 4, 1766. Since he was known to be a liberal and anti-Jesuit, he had a hostile reception from members of the previous government who were partisans of Don Pedro de Cevallos (1759-66). Around these two men who meant so much to the consolidation and development of Argentine nationalism, gathered two parties which reflected patterns of thought that were to continue throughout our country's history. Cevallos became the spokesman for the concervative party, called 'cevallista' or 'pelucones' because it was backed by the wealthiest and most influential businessmen. The party was also supported by the Jesuits, which won for its adherents the derogatory nickname of 'jeduiticas'. The followers of Bucarelli were merely called 'liberlls'.

The division between them was intensified when in 1767 the Jesuits were expelled from Spain and its colonies by royal decree. Bucarelli carried out this decree with excessive zeal in the River Plate, putting it into effect in Buenos Aires on June 7th of the same year. In August, 1768, he personally led an expedition to abolish the Jesuit missions in what was then Paraguay (today the Argentine province of Misiones).

The government of Charles III was absolutist in politics, liberal in thought and 'lay' in respect to limiting the influence of the church in affairs of state. In the River Plate as well as in Spain the liberal spirit found ready lodging in a group interested in expanding the economy by enlarging agricultural and industrial production. Since this necessitated scientific soil study nnd the development of skilled laborers, these men advocated a program of elementary education.

Their attitude is aptly reflected in a question voiced in a report by Manuel Belgrano to the Consulate: "How can one expect men to become honest citizens, virtue to dispel vice and government to reap the fruit of its citizens' labors if there is no education and if ignorance passes from generation to generation, ever growing worse?"

In 1770 Bucarelli returned to Spain where he used his influence at court to support the wise administration of his successor, Juan José Vèrtiz y Salcedo, the last governor (1770-1776) and first viceroy (1777-1784) of the colony. Vèrtiz, a "genuine representative of the 18th century Spanish liberal movement", decided to apply the "temporal benefits" expropriated from the Jesuits to create a university, and the College of San Carlos waw founded under royal authority. Vèrtiz also introduced the first printing press in Buenos Aires, and founded the first Argentine theater. In general, he urbanized the city and fostered social and cultural progress by every means that did not conflict with the enlightened absolutism of the Bourbon rulers.

Later this liberal spirit was fully assimilated and put into practice by the 'porteno' youth who thus became the heirs of a liberal democratic tradition that goes back to the early days of the colony.

The May Revolution of 1810 re-affirmed this liberalism. Under the leadership of its guiding genius, Dr. Mariona Moreno, it guaranteed freedom of thought and respect for human personality. Its manifesto also included a pronouncement against slavery. Its spirit was embodied in the organic legislation passed by the Assembly of the Year XIII which did away with slavery and abolished the tribunal of the Holy Inquisition.

The revolution culminated in the reforms inspired by Rivadavia (1822-1825) which led to a proclamation of freedom of conscience and religious preference for all the inhabitants of Argentina on October 12, 1825.

This same democratic and liberal spirit was developed doctrinally by the so-called 'generation of 37'. These were the youth, educated in the school of Rivadavia, who, under the leadership of Esteban Echeverría, organized a literary salon called "Young Argentina". During the time of the Rosas persecution it went underground and became a secret organization known as the May Association. Its doctrinal prindples were formulated in Echeverría's book, "Socialist Dogma".

The May Association's avowed aim was to carry out the ideals of the May Revolution and its influence made itself felt at Caseros where the tyranny of Rosas was ended in 1852 and in the Constitution of 1853 which was the starting point of a truly national government.

The liberal progressive spirit finally reached its highest expression with the passage of three basic secular laws in the '80's: one making public education free and compulsory, a second establishing civil matrimony and a third providing for municipal ownership of cemeteries.

The secular character of these laws should not be confused with atheism or hostility to religion: they were rather measures to protect the individual from arbitrary dogmatic pressure at his bitth, during his infancy and at deathl

None of these liberal aains was secured without constant opposition from "traditional, conservative and religious sentiment". Vèrtiz' successor expatriated the liberal priest Baltasar Maciel, director of the College of San Carlos. Both liberalism and traditionalism were always represented in the Consulate and the Cabildo (Assembly). The cataclysmic May Revolution itself was provoked by the reactionary policies of Viceroy Cisneros and certain members of the Cabildo: the feeling against them ran so high that the revolting Liberals named a governing Junta composed entirely of 'crioloss'(non-Spaniards).

However, the conservatives were able to effect the dissolution of this Junta, the formation of a new enlarged Junta and the resignation of Moreno. Later they imposed conditions at the Tucumàn Congress, provoked a reaction against Rivadavi's government under the name of 'apostolicos' and teached almost complete restoration under Rosar who thought he was chosen by God to bring back colonialism in its most reactionary manifestations. The conservatives also fought, although unsuccessfully, to have included in the Constitution of 1858 a law making the Roman Catholic Church the official state church.

Yet with all their efforts they were not able to undermine the religious freedom that had been won with such difficulty. From 1820 on, the English community held Protestant services and had its own cemetery in Buenos Aires. In 1825 the first Anglican church was built and others followed. Even under Rosas freedom of worship was not impaired and the Protestant schools were recognized.

This happy state of affairs continued right up to the conservative revolution of 1930, when things began to change. Some provinces re-introduced the Catholic catechism into the elementary schools and under Perón this was extended to military dictatorship and the Catholic clergy was broken towards the end of 1955, contributing to Perón's downfall.

With Perón removed and the Constitution restored, the struggle has been resumed. Once again the liberal and traditional currents of thought are in conflict, often in ways which permit no reconciliation.

And something significant has happened. No longer is the religious problem tacitly avoided as it apparently was, by secret agreement, at the Congress of Tucumàn. Instead, the hierarchy of the Catholic Church itself asks to have it considered in all its aspects, even requesting that the political parties define their position on such matters as the relation between church and state, 'free' education, divorce, and so forth.

We believe that our difficulties today are due to the fact that the religious problem was never clarified and formulated as it should have been. Instead it was by-passed, soft-pedaled, put off. While our country cannot be called anti-religious, much less atheistic, it has become indifferent and somewhat sceptical about religion as well as openly anti-clerical. Many take part in religious ceremonies only for social or political reasons.

Esteban Echeverría was the only one to single out this evil in the past and urge that it be confronted with vigor and decision. For him the lack of religious awareness explained dictatorships.

I can think of no better way to conclude than by quoting what he wrote on the subject:

"Some think that nothing should be said about religion; others have turned to philosophy. Generally speaking, religious matters interest our thinkers very little and at best they elicit an ironical smile, an error shared by some of our friends. Thus religious sentiment in our country has little by little become debilitated and been made meaningless. During the (May) revolution no one arose to elevate or illuminate its direction. Thus the simple beliefs of our forefathers have been lost, all moral ideas have been perverted in the popular conscience, and the most depraved of human instincts made into dogma. In our proud self-sufficiency we have thrown overboard the most potent force to refine and civilize our people: there is no human nor divine brake left to check unrestrained passion. Nothing remains but dull indifference, absurd and corrupting superstitions, and the practice of a sterile worship which only serves to entertain, as in a theater, for one does not find faith in unbelieving hearts."

"Do you who have been in power believe that if religious feeling had been cultivated in our country as it should have been, since no education was given the people, Rosas would have corrupted it so easily, or found such docile instruments for the cannibalistic barbarism that has so defamed the Argentine name?"

"You philosophers may have enough with your philosophy. But if you take away religion from the people, our people, what is left? Nothing remains but animal appetites, passions without rein, nothing that will console them or stimulate them to do good."

Analyzing the Catholic Church's intervention in Argentine politics, he continues:

"It is true that many times its preaching served the interests of national independence. But it could have been more useful, more pervading by evangelizing the multitudes fortifying their religious sentiment, preaching brotherhood and sanctifying the democratic dogmas of the May Revolution with a baptism of religious sanction."

Echeverria concludes, after abundant documentation and analysis:

"In view of all this, how shall we not refer to religion in our socialist dogma?... Was it not our duty to work for the rehabilitation of Christianity and of the priesthood just as we endeavored, through proselytizing our beliefs, to draw men's minds to conscience and liberty?"

In my opinion, the religious condition of the River Plate continues to be exactly that described by Echeverria. In the face of indifference and sceptisism, our essential mission is to evangelize the masses and to awaken the religious conscience of the intellectual class and the leaders of the nation.

Buenos Aires
July 18, 1957

SOCIAL CONDITIONS IN URUGUAY

by Rev. Emilio Castro

Paradoxically, we might define Uruguay as a nation which is conservative in its liberalism. Generally these terms are thought to be opposites. But today when the followers of Marx, trying to conquer the world, seek to break the capitalist mold in which we have been living, all or most of the people in Uruguay are trying to hold on to the gains secured by liberalism.

Thus in our country we can hardly speak of a "situation of rapid social change". Rather, we will talk of the continuation of a process initiated at the beginning of this century whereby a series of laws progressively bettered the condition of the workingman. There are, to be sure, some new factors arising from the growth of new industries. But they do not stand out distinctively in the democratic-liberal structure of the country. This is true to such an extent that the popular discontent arising from the always-increasing cost of living seeks expression not in violent economic and social change but in moderate reforms of the political structure of the government.

The Welfare State

Little by little Uruguay has moved along the road to state socialism. Railroads, urban transportation, electric power and the water supply are all state-controlled. In addition, there is the Institute of Colonization, charged with the task of carrying on a gradual agrarian reform in rural areas; in the field of banking there is a chain of state-owned national, mortgage and insurance banks, and in industry there is the ANCAP (government fuel monopoly).

The state also gives free medical aid to those who have less than a certain monthly income, contributes to retirement funds, and helps families with children of school age, paying benefits according to the number of children.

The state has moved into the economic sphere too, by means of a policy of subsidies and preferential exchanges granted to the agrarian producer as well as to the importer. This is to say that, while we still do have a system of free enterprise, that freedom is modified by state regulation.

This omnipresence of the state has several immediate effects that are of concern to clergymen. We do not deny

it has beneficial aspects in the equitable regulation of production and imports and exports. But we must point out the resulting problems of social significance which require the church's serious consideration.

1. During the last World War Uruguay began a process of industrialization which continued into the postwar years. The absence of foreign competition permitted the development of ambitious projects in the textile industry in particular. A policy of economic diversification fostered by the government also affected the rural areas; the nation sought to produce at home what it had previously imported free abroad. Thus plantations of sugar, olives and rice came into being. In itself this was a normal and necessary process, as in many other countries.

But since it was imposed by the state and was stimulated by the bestowal of special favors, subsidies, and preferential exchange rates, an unstable situation was created in industry. Consequently, while the laborer is to some extent protected by social welfare legislation, he lacks a feeling of secutity about his job and about what the morrow will bring. While there is in actual fact no widespread unemployment, there is a latent fear of unemployment.

The preacher must remember this when he faces a prolatarian congregation. Even though the economy is flourishing at present, subconsciously the laborer is afraid of the future. Labor may put on a show of power by carrying banners and torches during strikes. But the workingman knows through experience the strength of the big corporations and so he is afraid for himself as an individual. He rralizes, also, that if the government subsidies to his industry were to be taken away, it would mean his plant would shut down and he would be out of work. The case of the men who work in the rice fields is one exemple. Their wages and living conditions are evidently below the minimum national standard. Yet their employers refuse to remedy this inequity unless the state grants them an increase in prices and special exchange rates when exporting their product.

2. There is also a second problem. Little by little the Uruguayan has become accustomed to having the state solve his problems for him and so he has lost his individual initiative to an unhealthy degree. The state has become a Santa Claus to whom social and sporting clubs, school and welfare institutions also look for financial help. When a problem arises in the life of a community, the first statement is: "The state should do so-and-so." We must recall this fact, this very relevant fact, when we preach.

In other words, we are speaking to people who have formed the habit of blaming the government for everything that goes wrong. How far this is from the words of the Gospel which remind us of our unavoidable personal responsibility for our neighbor's problems! How far from the Gospel's admonition to admit our sins!

A different aspect of the same problem is the change in our young people's attitude toward a vocation. The majority of them, and many older people too, want a government job, a job obtained through political favor which will require little effort, take relatively little time, and pay reasonably well. Especially in the towns in the interior, a government career is the logical hope for a young man. There is no other kind of employment there that offers as much variety of choice, future security and chance of promotion as a government career.

4. A final effect of the growth of industry in the past 15 years is the tremendous growth of Montevideo. Very little industry has sprung up in the interior. But around the city a veritable industrial belt has been created that acts like a magnet to the rural population. It is not exaggerating to say that half the nation's population now lives in Montevideo. This results in a kind of macro-cephalism, that is, the head of the country has become too big for its body, with the following consequences: the worker lives a long way from his place of work, he is uprooted from his native community, he has acute transportation and housing problems. Ironically, the wretched slums that have grown up as result of the mushrooming growth of the city's population are called 'cantagriles', the name of an aristocratic residential area near the Punta del Este beach.

This is a situation of great significance for the preacher and the church. It is necessary to build a new community for the migrant, to restructure his life in new and often difficult circumstances.

The Labor Movement

The labor movement, that is, labor unionism, has grown considerably in both numbers and strength of political influence. Nevertheless, we think we are right in saying that there does not exist in our country a proletariat with a distinct class consciousness. The aim of the workingman is neither to preserve his c ass nor better its status, but to preserve himself, achieve material security, and if possible cease being a laborer. Thus we see many workingmen haunting political clubs and eventually, perhaps in middle age, obtaining a post like that of doorman at some government office. In doing so, even though economically he

may be no better off, he has achieved a higher 'social status' and left his former 'class' behind.

Union strikes and manifestos are not motivated by a long range strategy designed to put the proletariat into power. Rather, they merely seek the solution to an immediate economic need, a solution usually obtained without much trouble through the intervention of government authorities. The state intervenes as mediator in practically all conflicts between capital and labor; and usually it intervenes not just to arbitrate but also to underwrite the increased costs of wage raises either by subsidization or the authorization of a rise in prices.

As regards wages, there has been a constant effort to raise them without hurting capital management. But the net result of an attempt to satisfy everyone has been an inflationary process that negates the constant pay raises.

One might point out that a new element in union conflicts has recently appeared in Uruguay. Using new methods of pressure, labor has organized marches to the capital from distant towns in the interior, and leaders of the packing-plant workers have used hunger strikes as devices to impress public opinion.

Neither the Communist nor the Socialist Party has been able to capture the labor movement for its own political purposes. Although there are several openly communist unions, there are not enough of them to dominate the union movement; and if any labor group follows their lead it is due to a coincidence in ideological positions. Communism made serious electoral inroads right after the war due to the prestige Russia had gained during the war, but since then it has gradually decreased in strength. The Socialist Party has grown gradually in voting strength, but its roots are not in the proletariat. Apparently its doctrines are more attractive to university students and people of culture than to laborers.

The Catholic Church has organized its own unions, but so far they have gained little power. The Catholic political party has made considerable advances under the direction of a nucleus of leaders with exceptionally strong personal abilities, but the fear of Catholic ultramontanism hinders its general acceptance.

We end where we began. In Uruguay no rapid social changes are taking place. Rather, there is the constant strengthening of a process that began in the first decade

of this century when the country first achieved internal stability and which has been most marked during the past 15 years. It is characterized by state socialism in some economic areas; modified free capitalistic enterprise in others; economic regultion; social welfare legislation that protects the laborer; 'macro-cephalism' in Montevideo, and liberal conservatism.

If this picture is correct, it is one from which a preacher should take warning: his message is projected against a background of general complacency and national optimism. He should also keep in mind that the labor groups have superimposed on the proletarian mentality a number of liberal ideas that would inhibit them from accepting a really revolutionary program.

We would summarize the social changes in recent years under these categories:

1. Growth of the urban proletariat due to industrial expansion.

2. Extension of unionism among the population in the interior, and recognition of the social rights of the rural worker.

3. Development of unstable slum conditions in the Montevideo area.

Montevideo,
July 18, 1957

CHILE TODAY

by Pedro Zottele

With a population of over 6,000,000 and an area of 400,000 square kilometers, Chile is actually larger than any European nation except Russia. Yet, considering its area, one might think it could support many times the present number of its inhabitants, and offer them an easy and abundant life.

But the truth is quite the opposite. Nearly 90% of its territory is made up of deserts, inaccessible mountains, and islands in the Antarctic, all of which are uninhabitable. The population is concentrated mainly in the Central Valley, where it only rains five months in the year and where agriculture is difficult and costly since the land must be irrigated. Because of this, many Chileans have gone into mining (salt, copper, coal) and other forms of industry.

In recent years, especially since 1939, great efforts have been made to develop the industrial capacity of the nation in order to raise the standard of living of the population. A broad and rapid program of industralization has been undertaken which has included the training of capable leaders in vocational schools and technical institutes so that there might be available the manpower to carry it out. At the same time, since many rural laborers have left the plow for the lathe, the hatchet for the loom, there has been a great decrease nationwide in the production of much-needed food. Among other things, the production of milk and milk products has fallen off to the point where we are now raising a generation of undernourished children, in spite of our previous success in reducing adult and infant mortality and disease. As a result, the stature of the inhabitants, especially in the southern regions of Chile, is shrinking, slowly but persistently.

There have been other unfortunate consequences of the industrialization program. One is a runaway inflation which no one has been able to check. Factors contributing to it have been the intense desire of the middle class to buy more material comforts and to give their children a better education (in the last twenty years illiteracy has been reduced to the present 12%); and extensive imports of the machinery indispensable to the growth of industrialization. In spite of all the brakes instituted to restrain the inflationary process, it shows no signs of slowing down. On the contrary, during the past two years (1955-1956) it has increased 300 per cent. In 1939 the Chilean peso was valued at 25 to the dollar; today it is 700 to the dollar.

Food prices have also gone up as a result of decreases in production. Because the agricultural laborers have gone to the city in search of better wages, some of the arable land has gone out of cultivation and modern methods are not used on the remainder. The exodus to the cities has also raised rents and has resulted in a housing shortage so acute that Chile needs 350,000 new dwelling units to give her laboring class the minimum comforts needed to live decently.

As a result of the housing shortage, there have arisen the so-called 'callampas', slums rising overnight on unoccupied land. These in turn create health problems, lowered standards of morality, and problems of legal ownership. One of the health problems, has been a rise in tuberculosis with which 350,000 Chileans are now afflicted, one dying every hour. This is hardly the way one would choose to reduce overcrowding.

Alcoholism is another pernicious evil, aggravating the problem of an adequate diet in the home. So-called "recreation centers" are almost always places of physical, moral and financial degradation which lead hundreds of thousands of young people of both sexes to the depths of moral perdition. Prostitution has grown alarmingly, with a corresponding increase in venereal disease.

Some progress has been made in alleviating these appalling conditions by individual and government efforts. But for the most part, programs of social, economic and political betterment have been advanced which may be theoretically admirable, but have no inherent vitality or sincerity of purpose.

Generally speaking, when their propagators have had a chance to put them into practice they have had only superficial and temporary success. They clearly lack the moral dynamism which redeems and transforms men and inspires them in turn to transform others. The failings of their creaters have led to the failure of the programs.

The Communists who so roundly condemn the errors and miseries of modern society had their chance to remedy them in Chile when they came into political power. It was the popular expectation that they would introduce sweeping reforms. But after a year in office they were removed from the government, precisely because they pursued the same course as the "bourgoisie", using the most shameless methods to enrich themselves with land and special privileges. As political leaders, they were a complete failure.

The Christian Socialists(progressive Roman Catholics) also had the opportunity to form a government. Their achievements can be summed up in one sentence: the assiduous avoidance of any honest effort to find an effective solution to the problem.

In the meantime, the Rightists in the government have always sought to consolidate their own position, opposing every plan which might eliminate speculation in basic commodities or make for a more equitable distribution of wealth.

While members of the Radical (moderate) Party have acted as sincere and genuine socialists, trying as a rule to seek the welfare of the majority, they have lacked men of enough ability to execute the task and so their efforts have come to nothing.

In sum, Chile, a country with a climate generally temperate and conducive to work, still has one of the highest death rates in the world. In spite of advanced social welfare legislation, it has a paradoxical socio-economic situation in which vigorous manifestations of progress toward a more abundant life exist side by side with the most wretched conditions of poverty, disease and congenital debility.

In spite of an admirable program of popular education which places Chile among the nations who lead in cultural achievement, the task of producing educated citizens competent to solve their personal problems effectively and to cooperate in the solution of collective problems is slow, hard and frustrating. A contributing factor is the lack of men and women teachers whose lives have been so transformed by faith that they are a living example of what they teach.

Also, the union movement which has produced powerful Labor Confederations potentially capable of analyzing social problems and offering constructive solutions, has been consistently undermined by internal 'politicking'. Such low-level politics weaken its drive, misdirect its energies and make it ineffective.

In spite of these difficulties, a firm and clear democratic spirit flourishes in many areas where men and women of noble intentions and high ideals are to be found. Unfortunately their numbers are still small and their strength weak. But they and the people of integrity who are members of political parties and labor unions are the ones whom Protestants must influence in the effort to strengthen the good and defeat the unworthy.

The present situation in Chile, in short, should move the Protestant churches to undertake the task of courageously implanting its moral and religious principles and teaching the Christian approach to the social, economic and political aspects of life. It must make incarnate in the lives of its members the principles and ideals it so nobly and courageously preaches. It must lead men and women to understand that carrying out the will of God through adherence to Christian principles and goals is an integral part of the evangelistic task of the church. It must help its members as individuals strictly to fulfill their functions and moral responsibilities.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

A. Responsible Citizenship.

In historical situations of rapid social change, the Christian and the church both have a responsibility of a special kind. The very rapidity of the transformation of the social order creates the danger that social thinking will not keep pace with it; and that a gospel will be preached that neither applies to nor satisfies its changing needs. We find the basis of this responsibility in the following affirmations of our faith:

1. God's purposes include justice in the collective relationships among social groups as well as in the relations between individuals.

   "(Christ) is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility... that He might... reconcile us both to God in one body through the Cross." Ephesians 2:14,16.

2. Many Protestants have interpreted the Christian faith in individual terms, without sufficient concern for the obligations that Christianity imposes for socio-political action.

   "The Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many." Mark 10:45.

3. Christ calls us to individual and collective repentance, for all of us are implicated in the sins of our countries.

   "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered thus? I tell you, No, but unless you repent you will all likewise perish." Luke 13: 2,3.

4. One sin of which all human beings are guilty is the tendency to give greater importance to their own interests than to the interests of society.

   "(Cain) said... Am I my brother's keeper?" Genesis 4: 9.

5. Man is a unity; therefore his spirit is affected by what affects his body, and much of his personality is determined by his social relationships.

> "May the God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." I Thessalonians 5: 23.

6. Christians are responsible for everything before Christ and God's work in Christ, and this responsibility should free them from the influence of changing ideologies.

> "I am... the truth." John 14:6. "For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness." Ephesians 6:12.

7. Christ calls us to witness and to share our faith and to present it to men, not as a set of ideas for debating, but as a way of living with man and with God, affirmed by daily decisions and by the continual divine presence. This sharing leads us Christians to serve each other with love and for the sake of love.

We recognize that in our countries we are far from having a sufficient number of citizens in our Protestant churches who understand their responsibilities to the political and social order. We recognize also that our churches themselves have not been of enough help in making their members aware of their individual and collective responsibility in the face of the urgent problems of the day.

The 'responsible Christian citizen' has a profound knowledge of the Bible and the historical development of the Christian faith; he is concerned with analyzing and understanding the historic and political reality of his environment; and he creates a vital relationship between the Christian faith and the society he lives in, so that he feels impelled to participate actively in the politico-soci l world around him.

As regards the Christian faith, we recognize that:

1. We have not made clear all the implications of love of one's neighbor in response to God's love, in its relation to politico-social conscience and action.

2. We have interpreted the Christian faith in excessively individualistic terms, without much concerning ourselves about the obligations that faith imposes in the politico-social sphere.

3. We have put too little emphasis in the total evangelistic message on the obligation laid upon us of working to bring Christian thought and principle to bear on the institutions that define the citizen's politico-social life.

4. We have often forgotten that God judges every human institution and we have not given constructive witness in evaluating our politico-social institutions in the light of that judgment as best we understand it.

5. We have let ourselves think that those responsible for the deficiencies in our politico-social order are persons outside the Protestant ranks, without recognizing our part in the sins we point out and without seeking God's forgiveness and help to more Christian action in the future.

6. Frequently escaping behind moralistic pretexts, we have deliberately avoided the responsibility of analyzing what our faith involves in the way of politico-social action.

As regards the concrete historical situations we have had to face, we recognize that:

1. Although there have been constant statements issued on social problems, political systems and conditions of social injustice, we have not made the serious and systematic study of these that would enable us to help our laymen congregations formulate attitudes that would be healthily Christian and politically intelligent.

2. We have forgotten that within the ranks of the Protestant church there are trained personnel who could help us to a concrete understanding of the opportunities for for Christian service offered in our society.

As regards the relation between our faith and our politico-social action:

1. Although we recognize that churches and other Protestant organizations have been concerned with the politico-social responsibility of the Protestant Christian, we have not given this the consistent attention it demands.

2. We must stimulate our members, and especially our young people, to participate in the politico-social sphere through active Christian participation in civic, political and union movements, etc., and to this end we must support them with our prayers and in every way we can.

3. Although at various times churches and Protestant groups have cried out against social, political and economic injustices and restrictions on freedom of various kinds, nevertheless we have failed in consistent and effective, well-publicized action. In not a few cases, we have lacked courage to denounce the evils ourselves and have tacitly let them continue.

4. We have not done enough to strengthen the spiritual and moral bases of our families, our communities and our society in order to create an atmosphere conducive to public integrity and respect for the rights of others.

5. We recognize that we do not at present have the organization and administrative methods necessary to maintain a constant interest in the study of the politico-social situation and to carry out the action called for in the four statements above.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

B. Large City Problems

When we consider, in the light of God's revelation through Jesus Christ, the love He manifests toward men and His desire for them to have a rich and abundant life, as witness His perfect incarnation in the human condition, we believe that the church cannot evade its responsibility toward the problems of human society and their effect on man's daily life.

One of the acute problems that calls for our close attention is the kind of life people live in urban centers. The cities have grown enormously as a result of industrialization and its concomitant effects.

They have been receiving a large influx of people who often have no definite purpose in coming to live in them. At the same time, among the various centers of urban spiritual life are Protestant churches which carry on their work ignorant of, or divorced from, the serious problems that confront large masses of the urban population. It is because of this state of affairs that we point out the following problems, which should be a challenge to the churches:

1. AN URBAN POPULATION WITHOUT ROOTS. Because jobs in industry pay better and promise a higher standard of living, we have seen in our countries a mass exodus to the city from the rural areas. But these migrants often come to the industrial centers without the training and skills they need to qualify for jobs in an industrial world that is becoming increasingly more specialized in its labor requirements.

Because of their lack of training or incapacity to learn a craft, many find themselves without a job or with only temporary and fluctuating employment. In some cases this results in their turning to illicit pursuits.

Further complicating the situation are political, economic and social factors which sometimes result in the sudden dismissal of a whole labor force. This creates a feeling of uncertainty in many families and may force the head of the family to leave for another city in search of employment.

The first group, i.e., those who are incapable of meeting the demands of their new environment, often fall into a way of living that might be called 'urban nomadism', while

remaining within the city limits, they drift from one dwelling-place to another, earn money when and how they can, do not exert themselves more than necessary and, if they have to, even "pick up stakes" and leave the area.

Recent statistics indicate that the housing problem has also become acute in our countries. There is a high percentage of married couples who can find no place to live and are forced to stay with their parents, with all the problems this involves. The situation is aggravated by the long distances between home and place of work and the absence of adequate transportation between the city and its outskirts.

In the absence of the kind of surroundings conducive to the development of a healthy family life, people are forced to make do with miserable and inadequate housing. This has led to the development of the famous 'misery villages' and 'tin towns'. Lived under the pressure of such conditions, city life takes on an irregular rhythm and an irresponsible character that breaks with previous experience.

2. BREAKDOWN OF THE FAMILY. The foregoing factors are some of the causes of a crisis that has arisen in family relations. Other causes contributing to it are the growing tendency of women to work outside the home, the artificial inducement by advertising of a demand for more material comforts, the difference in working hours among members of the same family, the multiplicity of attractions outside the home, the ease with which a divorce may now be attained, and the change in attitude on the part of large groups toward what the function of the home should be. All these factors have dislocated traditional patterns of family life and changed its structure, leading to the development of new types of personal relationships.

3. CHILDREN AND YOUTH PROBLEMS. In this area there are two basic needs:

a. How to prevent juvenile delinquency.

b. How to influence children and young people to make good use of their free time. Negative factors operating here are the concentration and commercialization of vice in the city; the low level of public entertainment, which also is highly commercialized, in the form of movies, theaters, sport events, cafés, so-called 'family' dances, and so forth.

To counteract these, more wholesome activities should be stimulated like the formation of church and Protestant youth groups, cooperation with the YMCA where it exists, the encouragement of healthy sports and cultural acitivities like music, drama, reading and courses at night school which might assist young people in the pursuit of a vocation.

4. THE RELIGIOUS APATHY OF THE LABORING CLASS. The urban proletariat of our countries is largely non-Christian and sometimes anti-Christian, even though its members have been influenced only slightly by revolutionary and materialistic socialistic doctrines -- less, probably, than in more highly-industrialized countries. However, there are some rudimentary religious survivals, including attendance at religious services, chiefly Catholic, a smattering of Christian beliefs and considerable superstition.

The causes of this attitude are rooted in the past: in South America the church was on the side of the conservatives during the early period of social change; secularism in government, education and life in general has long been in the ascendant; the philosophical tradition of positivism has been prevalent in our universities; and the influence of Marxist thought has been strong, particularly Marx's assertion that 'religion is the opiate of the people'.

Today the Roman Catholic Church has, as ways of reaching the laboring-class, organizations like the Catholic Labor Youth and other union movements. It also directs and organizes social work among laborers.

While some Protestant churches do social work in Uruguay, Chile and Argentina, there are no social apostolate movements within the laboring class. The church's message is too individualistic; it lacks social empathy and it has not taken root in its surroundings.

5. THE CHURCH IN THE FACE OF SOCIAL CHANGE. The situation of the church as regards the social problems which have arisen in these areas is as follows:

a. Except in rare instances there is a gulf between the church and the world of labor.

b. From the point of view of labor, the church is identified with the middle class and the 'bourgoisie'. At the same time it is seen as administering a kind of 'charity' which, though beneficient, is ineffective.

c. The churches lack leaders who are trained to study and confront social, economic and political problems.

d. The church has not taught its members who are employees and laborers anything about the problems that arise in labor relations. Nor has it promoted a study of existing and projected legislation which might help them to know what their rights and responsibilities are.

In view of this situation, it is urgent that the church stimulate its membership to make a serious study of economics, sociology, labor legislation, urbanization, industrial relations, etc. The church should also stimulate the active participation of Christians in union and management organizations, with the object of finding areas of understanding and cooperation between capital and labor and thus reducing their increasing antagonism toward one another.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

C. The Rural Situation

Because of the wide area covered by the countries included in the consultation and the consequent diversity of conditions to be found in them, this committee did not have time to make a study profound enough to lead to definite conclusions. Therefore we are presenting a very general report which we feel should be the basis for further study. Our report is as follows:

It is our opinion that the Argentine countryside is urgently in need of profound spiritual attention. This presents a challenge to the evangelizing force of the Protestant church. To understand why the need is so urgent, one must remember that vast areas of the countryside are beyond the reach of the influence of the Protestant colonies which were first established in 1856.

The social structure of the rural areas has remained stable, since few innovations have been introduced in ways of tilling the soil. To some extent, however, agricultural activities have been modified by recent social and political developments.

1. In the more fertile areas, the middle-sized farmer, who may either own or rent his land, predominates. He has enough land to enjoy a more than adequate standard of living. While there are both landlords with big holdings and small farmers, the middle group sets the norms of production.

2. The agrarian laws which previously only guaranteed a minimum of security to the farmer who rented his land have been reformed. The law now forbids his dispossession except when he fails to pay his rent.

3. The laws of the Perón regime fixed a high wage for rural laborers and made expensive housing requirements for them compulsory. They also obligated owners to hire a certain number of laborers for field tasks without regard to the size of their families; and they compelled farmers to sell their crops to agricultural cooperatives at prices fixed by the government. These prices were far below those in the international market. Consequently the farmers cut down so much on their production of grain that there were years during which the country, traditionally a grain exporter, had to import it.

4. The area under cultivation was further reduced by an exodus of the rural population to the cities, attracted by the high wages in industry. Another factor was the impossibility of replacing agricultural machinery since it was forbidden to import it.

However, with the fall of the Perón regime, these conditions no longer hold and agriculture is being rapidly remechanized. The use of machinery to harvest crops like corn, sunflowers and rice is in part compensating for the scarcity of laborers.

What the rural areas need are improved means of communication and better roads, the latter both to permit people to move around more easily and to facilitate the transportation of farm products. They would also help in the education of farm children which does not suffer from the lack of schools so much as from the long distances the children have to travel.

The churches could contribute effectively in the following ways:

1. In the field of education, more student homes in cities with high schools and universities could be created like those which already exist in Rosario del Tala and Concordia, Entre Rios. Also, the positive effect of farm schools with boarding departments has long been demonstrated by the Adventist Institutes in Progrese, Uruguay and Puigari, Entre Rios.

2. The churches could foster the growth of the religious spirit in the rural areas by intensified evangelism and frequent and well-planned visits to distribute Bibles. This visitation program might be modeled on the Francisco Penzotti Institute founded by the Bible Societies in Mexico to serve all Latin America. The Protestant communities, traditionally esteemed for their morals and work habits, could serve as a starting-point and base of operations.

In Uruguay, the colonies of Protestant origin are the important and influential Waldensian Colony, which has branched out extensively, and the Swiss colonies. In Argentina the Protestant colonies extend from the Chubut Valley, peopled by the Welsh, to Formosa and Misiones in the Pampa where there are the Waldensian colonies of Jacinto and Colonia Iris. The Danish and Dutch colonies south of Buenos Aires have their centers at Tandil and Tres Arroyos. In Santa Fe the First colony was established in Esperanza and has grown to encompass the whole center of the province. There are Swiss-German colonies around Rosario and Waldensians in Belgrano, San Carlos and Alejandra, tha last of which was started by the Anglicans and is now

served by the Methodists. The innumerable Protestant colonies of various origins in Entre Rios and the south of Corrientes should also be noted, along with a great many families of Protestant origin in the Chaco, Formosa and Misiones. Due to the labors of these families, these areas have made a great deal of progress.

Other matters of interest that should be pointed out are the following:

1. The depopulation of rural areas in Argentina does not mean that the cities in the interior have declined in population; on the contrary, they have the same housing problems as the capital cities.

2. There are important industries located in many small cities of the interior, such as Venado Tuerto, Pergamino, etc.

3. There are some provinces, like the northern and Andean ones, where the standard of living is low in the cities as well as in the rural areas, and which are dificient in educational and medical facilities. There are few Protestants living in these areas and little evangelical work is done. The latter should be intensified, especially Bible visitations, like those made toward the close of the last century on foot or by mule.

4. In the Chaco there are a large number of Indians who still live under primitive conditions and are not considered as citizens by the Argentine government. The church must realize the need to carry on the task of defending their human and legal rights. For example, they should not be exploited by being paid in alcoholic beverages instead of wages. The efforts made by the Anglican and Mennonite missions should be studied and carefully revised in order to make more effective the evangelization and social betterment of the Indians.

We should remember that the preaching of the Gospel has led to important and positive conversions and brought the Indian to a new consciousness of his rights and duties. A struggle has also been carried on to have him treated humanely. As a result, the Indian has come to realize his own worth, through understanding and accepting the fact that Christ died on the cross to redeem him, too.

THE FUTURE OF THE PROJECT

CONSIDERING

1. That, as the work of this consultation has shown, our churches are far behind in the study of the problems caused by rapid social change in our areas, and

2. The certainty we have felt that this consultation is only a small beginning and an indication of an important task to be done in this field,

IT IS PLANNED

1. To request the Governing Board of the Confederation of Protestant Churches of the River Plate and the National Protestant Council of Chile to take the necessary steps as soon as possible to ensure in our countries the continuation of the study of Christian responsibility in areas of rapid social change.

2. To recommend that the basic purpose of continuing the study should be to stimulate thought and action in the churches and among Protestant Christians in general, with regard to Christian responsibility in these matters.

IT IS ALSO RECOMMENDED

1. That, in view of the urgency and importance of the task, someone should be engaged to direct studies to be made on this subject, and to take charge of the publicaaion and propagation of the studies, etc.

2. That in the future the committee charged with pursuing this study should arrange periodoc consultations like this one on the regional-national as well as the regional-international level; and that the study and any action stemming from it should continue to be carried out within the ecumenical framework already established by keeping up an exchange of information on the project with other regions similarly engaged.

3. That, in continuing the study of these problems, special consideration should be given to the following: the development of unionims, the disproportionate growth ('macro-cephalism') of capital cities, political corruption, restrictions on freedom, clericalism in politics, public elementary and civic education, land reform,

inadequate housing conditions, unemployment, the breakdown of the family, militarism, and the rise of 'caudillos' (strong men).

4. That the possibility should be kept in mind of obtaining, wherever feasible, the cooperation of experts on social and economic matters in the task of analyzing and interpreting conditions in the areas of rapid social change with which we are concerned.

RESULTS OF THE MONTEVIDEO CONSULTATION

CONSIDERING

The desirability of doing everything possible to transmit to the churches of our countries and elsewhere the results of the studies and tasks undertaken by the participating members of the consultation,

IT IS PLANNED

To ask the secretaries of the consultation to prepare a report, which would be mimeographed, and include the following points:

a. Report of the consultation.

b. A résumé of the analysis of the social situation in Argentina, Uruguay and Chile.

c. Conclusions arrived at as a result of the deliberations of the committees.

d. List of the members of the consultation.

Confederation of Protestant Church
of the River Plate

Tucumán 358 - 6to L.
Buenos Aires, Argentina.

MEMBERS OF THE CONSULTATION

Chairman:	Bishop Enrique C. Balloch
Vice-Chairman:	Pastor Rudolf Obermuller
Secretaries:	Miss Jorgelina Lozada Mr. Luis E. Odell
Secretary in charge of the Minutes:	Prof. Julio de Santa Ana
Consultant and Fraternal Delegate from the World Council of Churches:	Rev. Paul Abrecht.

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Julio Rubén Sabanes, Pastor of the Methodist Church, Argentina. Professor of Philosophy and Educational Science.

Jorgelina Lozada, Pastor of the Disciples of Christ. Executive Secretary and Secretary of Christian Education of the Confederation of Protestant Churches of the River Plate.

Daniel D. Lurá Villanueva, Lawyer. Representative of the Movement of Christian Professors and Professionals, Argentina. Professor of the Union Theological Seminary.

Raúl E. Staude. Representative of the Buenos Aires YMCA. Secretary of the University Division of the YMCA.

Daniel P. Monti, Pastor. Methodist District Superintendent. Writer, journalist. Director of "El Estandarte Evangélico".

J. Deibert, Lutheran Pastor. Professor of the Lutheran Theological Seminary, Argentina.

Feliciano A. Sarli, Pastor of the Disciples of Christ. Director of the Protestant Mutual Movement.

Elias Salama, Argentine youth leader. Economist.

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Avel Jourdan, Pastor. District Superintendent of The Methodist Church in Uruguay. President of the Federation of Protestant Churches in Uruguay.

Juan Tron, Pastor. President of the Executive Committee of the Waldensian Church, River Plate District.

Earl M. Smith, Pastor. Director of Friendship House, Cerro, Montevideo, social work of The Methodist Church.

Nelson Litwiller, Bishop of The Mennonite Church. Director of the Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Montevideo.

José A. Richero, Educator. Director of the High School of Crandon Institute, Montevideo. President of the YMCA.

Luis Ciceri, active layman in The Methodist Church. Specialist in Social Security. Industrial employee.

Emilio Castro, Pastor of Central Methodist Church, Montevideo.

Arturo Sánchez Palacios, Doctor, President of the Student Christian Movement in Uruguay.

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Julio de Santa Ana, Professor of History and Bible in Crandon Institute.

Luis E. Odell, Secretary of the Federation of Protestant Churches of Uruguay. Vicepresident of the Confederation of Protestant Churches of the River Plate. Administrator of Crandon Institute.

FRATERNAL DELEGATES

Professor Pedro G. Beguè, of the Continental Board of the South American Federation of the YMCA.

Professor Mauricio López, of the World Christian Student Federation. Secretary for Latin America.

Theological Student, Mr. José Pulgar, of Chile.

Rev. Paul Abrecht, Executive Secretary of the Division of "Church and Society" of the World Council of Churches.